



**UNDERAGE DRINKING – IT
DOESN'T END AT HIGH SCHOOL**

CHOOSING THE RIGHT COLLEGE

Michael M. Gimbel, Director

410-938-3100

www.sheppardpratt.org

Parents: A Primary Influence

As a parent you continue to be a primary influence in your son's or daughter's life. You are key in helping them choose the right college so that they get the best education possible. At the same time, you also need to ensure that when they go off to college they live in a safe environment. There are three distinct stages in which you, as a parent, contribute in critical ways to the decisionmaking involving your college-bound son or daughter:

I. Parents of a High School Student—Choosing the Right College

- As you examine potential colleges, include in your assessment inquiries about campus alcohol policies.
- During campus visits, ask college administrators to outline in clear terms how they go about enforcing underage drinking prevention, whether the school sponsors alcohol-free social events, what other socializing alternatives are available to students, what procedures are in place to notify parents about alcohol and substance abuse problems, what counseling services are available to students, and how energetic and consistent the follow-up is on students who exhibit alcohol abuse and other problem behaviors.
- Inquire about housing arrangements and whether alcohol-free dorms are available.
- Ask whether the college/university employs student resident advisors (RAs) or adults to manage/monitor dormitories.
- If there are fraternities and/or sororities on campus, inquire about their influence on the overall social atmosphere at the college.
- Ask if the school offers Friday classes. Administrators are increasingly concerned that no classes on Friday may lead to an early start in partying on the weekends and increased alcohol abuse problems.
- Find out the average number of years it takes to graduate from that college.
- Determine the emphasis placed on athletics on campus and whether tailgating at games involves alcohol.
- Find out the number of liquor law violations and alcohol-related injuries and deaths the campus has had in previous years.
- Finally, consider the location of the college and how it may affect the social atmosphere.

Influence of Living Arrangements on Drinking Behavior

The proportion of college students who drink varies depending on where they live. Drinking rates are highest in fraternities and sororities, followed by on-campus housing. Students who live independently off-site (e.g., in apartments) drink less, while commuting students who live with their families drink the least.

Important Facts for Parents

A number of environmental influences working in concert with other factors may affect students' alcohol consumption. Excessive alcohol use is more likely to occur in colleges:

- Where Greek systems dominate (i.e., fraternities, sororities)
- Where athletic teams are prominent
- Located in the Northeast

II. Parents of a College Freshman—Staying Involved

- Pay special attention to your son's or daughter's experiences and activities during the crucial first 6 weeks on campus. With a great deal of free time, many students initiate heavy drinking during these early days of college, and the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life. You should know that about one-third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year.
- Find out if there is a program during orientation that educates students about campus policies related to alcohol use. If there is one, attend with your son or daughter, or at least be familiar with the name of the person who is responsible for campus counseling programs.
- Inquire about and make certain you understand the college's "parental notification" policy.
- Call your son or daughter frequently during the first 6 weeks of college.
- Inquire about their roommates, the roommates' behavior, and how disagreements are settled or disruptive behavior dealt with.
- Make sure that your son or daughter understands the penalties for underage drinking, public drunkenness, using a

fake ID, driving under the influence, assault, and other alcohol-related offenses. Indicate to them that you have asked the college/university to keep you informed of infractions to school alcohol policies. [For alcohol policies on college campuses see www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/policies]

- Make certain that they understand how alcohol use can lead to date rape, violence, and academic failure.

III. Parents of a College Student Facing an Alcohol-Related Crisis—Getting Assistance

- Be aware of the signs of possible alcohol abuse by your son or daughter (e.g., lower grades, never available or reluctant to talk with you, unwilling to talk about activities with friends, trouble with campus authorities, serious mood changes).
- If you believe your son or daughter is having a problem with alcohol, do not blame them, but find appropriate treatment.
- Call and/or visit campus health services and ask to speak with a counselor.
- Indicate to the Dean of Students, either in person or by email, your interest in the welfare of your son or daughter and that you want to be actively involved in his or her recovery despite the geographic separation.
- If your son or daughter is concerned about his or her alcohol consumption, or that of a friend, have them check out www.alcoholscreening.org for information about ongoing screening for problems with alcohol.
- Pay your son or daughter an unexpected visit. Ask to meet their friends. Attend Parents' Weekend and other campus events open to parents.
- Continue to stay actively involved in the life of your son or daughter. Even though they may be away at college, they continue to be an extension of your family and its values.

In 1999, a majority of college and university presidents identified alcohol abuse as one of the greatest problems facing campus life and students. *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges* presents a series of recommendations to college presidents, researchers, parents, and students to deal with this continuing public health problem in a scientific and sensible way. We encourage parents to continue to educate themselves by referring to and using the materials at www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov.

Online Resources

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
www.niaaa.nih.gov
- Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free
<http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/>
- NIAAA Kids Web Site
www.thecoolspot.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
www.samhsa.gov
- U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov
- U.S. Department of Justice
www.usdoj.gov

Historical document
Last reviewed: 9/23/2005

A Snapshot of Annual High-Risk College Drinking Consequences

The consequences of excessive and underage drinking affect virtually all college campuses, college communities, and college students, whether they choose to drink or not.

- **Death:** 1,700 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes ([Hingson et al., 2005](#)).
- **Injury:** 599,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are unintentionally injured under the influence of alcohol ([Hingson et al., 2005](#)).
- **Assault:** More than 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking ([Hingson et al., 2005](#)).
- **Sexual Abuse:** More than 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape ([Hingson et al., 2005](#)).
- **Unsafe Sex:** 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 had unprotected sex and more than 100,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 report having been too intoxicated to know if they consented to having sex ([Hingson et al., 2002](#)).
- **Academic Problems:** About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall ([Engs et al., 1996](#); [Presley et al., 1996a, 1996b](#); [Wechsler et al., 2002](#)).
- **Health Problems/Suicide Attempts:** More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem ([Hingson et al., 2002](#)) and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use ([Presley et al., 1998](#)).
- **Drunk Driving:** 2.1 million students between the ages of 18 and 24 drove under the influence of alcohol last year ([Hingson et al., 2002](#)).
- **Vandalism:** About 11 percent of college student drinkers report that they have damaged property while under the influence of alcohol ([Wechsler et al., 2002](#)).
- **Property Damage:** More than 25 percent of administrators from schools with relatively low drinking levels and over 50 percent from schools with high drinking levels say their campuses have a "moderate" or "major" problem with alcohol-related property damage ([Wechsler et al., 1995](#)).
- **Police Involvement:** About 5 percent of 4-year college students are involved with the police or campus security as a result of their drinking ([Wechsler et al., 2002](#)) and an estimated 110,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are arrested for an alcohol-related violation such as public drunkenness or driving under the influence ([Hingson et al., 2002](#)).
- **Alcohol Abuse and Dependence:** 31 percent of college students met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and 6 percent for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence in the past 12 months, according to questionnaire-based self-reports about their drinking ([Knight et al., 2002](#)).

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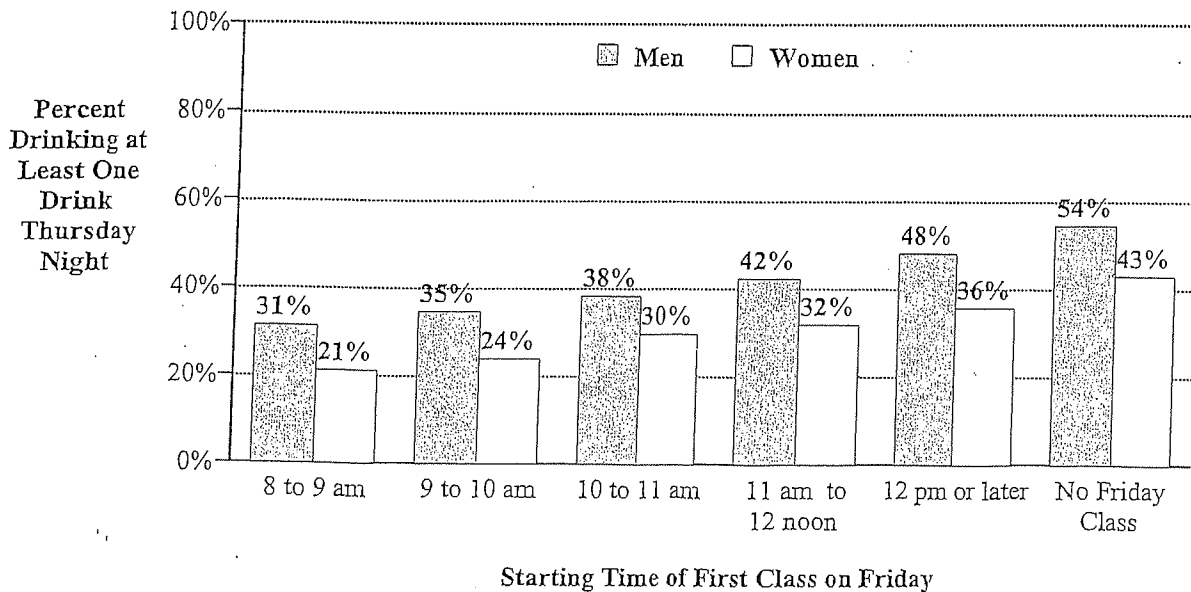
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

College Students More Likely to Drink on Thursday Nights If They Have Late Classes on Friday

Holding classes on Fridays, especially before 10 am, may reduce excessive drinking on Thursday nights by college students, according to a study of undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university. Students reported higher rates of drinking on Thursday night when their Friday classes started at later times, or when they did not have Friday classes at all. For example, 31% of male students with a Friday class starting between 8 and 9 am reported having at least one drink on Thursday night, compared to 48% of those with a class starting at 12 pm or later and 54% with no Friday classes (see figure below). Similar results were found for binge drinking on Thursday night (data not shown). The effect of Friday class scheduled held even after controlling for factors associated with drinking, such as precollege heavy drinking, involvement in Greek activities, and number of attempted credit hours. The authors conclude that “early Friday classes represent a cost-effective way to reduce alcohol consumption on campus, and controlled evaluations of altering the class schedule should be undertaken” (p. 1206).

Thursday Night Drinking Among College Students, by Starting Time of First Class on Friday
(N=3,341 first-time undergraduate students at a large Midwestern public university who had drunk in the past three months)



SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Wood, Phillip K., Sher, Kenneth J., and Rutledge, Patricia C. “College Student Alcohol Consumption, Day of the Week, and Class Schedule,” *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 31(7):1195-1207, 2007. For more information, contact Phillip Wood at woodph@missouri.edu.

•• 301-405-9770 (voice) •• 301-403-8342 (fax) •• CESAR@cesar.umd.edu •• www.cesar.umd.edu ••
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Facts About Alcohol Poisoning

Excessive drinking can be hazardous to everyone's health! It can be particularly stressful if you are the sober one taking care of your drunk roommate, who is vomiting while you are trying to study for an exam.

Some people laugh at the behavior of others who are drunk. Some think it's even funnier when they pass out. But there is nothing funny about the aspiration of vomit leading to asphyxiation or the poisoning of the respiratory center in the brain, both of which can result in death.

Do you know about the dangers of alcohol poisoning? When should you seek professional help for a friend? Sadly enough, too many college students say they wish they would have sought medical treatment for a friend. Many end up feeling responsible for alcohol-related tragedies that could have easily been prevented.

Common myths about sobering up include drinking black coffee, taking a cold bath or shower, sleeping it off, or walking it off. But these are just myths, and they don't work. The only thing that reverses the effects of alcohol is time-something you may not have if you are suffering from alcohol poisoning. And many different factors affect the level of intoxication of an individual, so it's difficult to gauge exactly how much is too much ([BAC calculators](#)).

What Happens to Your Body When You Get Alcohol Poisoning?

Alcohol depresses nerves that control involuntary actions such as breathing and the gag reflex (which prevents choking). A fatal dose of alcohol will eventually stop these functions.

It is common for someone who drank excessive alcohol to vomit since alcohol is an irritant to the stomach. There is then the danger of choking on vomit, which could cause death by asphyxiation in a person who is not conscious because of intoxication.

You should also know that a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) can continue to rise even while he or she is passed out. Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. It is dangerous to assume the person will be fine by sleeping it off.